

October 20, 2006 - Slaughter Releases Update on Storm Recovery Activities

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Friday, October 20, 2006

Slaughter Releases Update on Storm Recovery Activities

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-Fairport), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, was today in touch with top officials in Buffalo, Tonawanda, and at the National Grid to assess the status of recovery operations following the winter storm of October 12th.

Power restoration throughout Western New York is expected to be completed by the end of this weekend. Rep. Slaughter has remained active throughout the week, working to ensure that federal agencies are coordinating response and recovery efforts with local authorities as efficiently as possible.

Rep. Slaughter has already worked on numerous individual cases. She encourages any citizens who remain in need of assistance to contact one of her Congressional offices in the 28th district or in Washington, DC.

BACKGROUND: SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES SINCE 10/13:

Since last Friday, Rep. Slaughter and her staff have been actively assisting recovery operations.

- On Friday, October 13, Rep. Slaughter sent a letter to Governor Pataki urging that he declare a state of emergency in Buffalo and Erie County and that he contact the Federal Emergency Management Agency for assistance.

- **DISASTER AREA DECLARATION:** On the same day, she sent a second letter, cosigned by Senator Schumer, Senator Clinton, and Rep. Brian Higgins, to President Bush urging that he declare Western New York as a Federal Disaster Area as soon as he had received Governor Pataki's request for such a designation.

- **STATE OF EMERGENCY:** On Sunday, October 15, President Bush declared a State of Emergency for Western New York, which authorized federal agencies and resources to be used as part of the recovery effort. On Sunday, President Bush made that declaration, which allowed FEMA to begin clearing debris and reimbursing city and county governments for their expenses.

- **CONTACTS WITH RECOVERY OFFICIALS:** Throughout this past week, Rep. Slaughter and her staff have been in regular contact with officials from FEMA, the National Grid, Governor Pataki's Office, Mayor Byron Brown's office, and the Buffalo Police Department in an effort to assist and expedite recovery operations. Rep. Slaughter has also spoken with officials from the City of Tonawanda, one of the areas hardest hit by the storm, to better assess their remaining needs.

- **CATEGORY A and B FUNDING:** FEMA is already providing Category A and B funding for affected Western New York counties. This funding is used to help state and local governments with debris removal and emergency protective measures designed to save lives, protect public health, and ensure safety and property. It will be 75% federally funded, with 25% in matching funds coming from state and local governments. Governor Pataki has announced that the State will cover the 25% in matching funds.

FINANCIAL AID FOR INDIVIDUALS

- MAJOR DISASTER AREA: On Monday, Rep. Slaughter sent a letter to Governor Pataki asking him to request FEMA aid for individual homeowners. Two FEMA programs exist which can assist uninsured households to repair damage to their residences. The programs also reimburse residents for the purchases of primary heating sources. However, FEMA can only release reimbursement funds after the State of New York has made a formal request to the Department of Homeland Security that the area in question be declared a "Major Disaster Area." Governor Pataki has since made that request.

- URGING THE PRESIDENT: On Wednesday, Rep. Slaughter, Senator Clinton, Senator Schumer, Rep. Reynolds, and Rep. Higgins sent a joint letter to President Bush and FEMA asking him to declare Western New York a Major Disaster Area as soon as possible so that funds can flow to individuals and businesses. Currently, FEMA and New York State joint assessment teams are still surveying damage on the ground. Their assessment must be completed before the Major Disaster Area designation can be made.

- PUBLIC BRIEFINGS: Once a major disaster declaration has been issued by President Bush, FEMA will hold public briefings on how individuals and businesses can apply for limited reimbursements. Rep. Slaughter's office will publicize these meetings, as well as answer questions concerning individual eligibility for federal funds.

###